

Comments on: Tyler Wheeldon and Brent Patterson. 2022. Dispelling myths about the origins of wolf–coyote hybrids and related *Canis* species in Ontario. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 136: 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.22621/cfn.v136i2.2853>

Wheeldon and Patterson presented evidence that extant wolf–coyote hybrids in Ontario are the result of natural events and not descendants of escapees or releases from captive breeding experiments. They quoted supporting statements by two of the three early-day directors of Ontario wolf research programs—Rod Standfield and George Kolensoky. I can add that permanent releases did not occur during Douglas Pimlott’s 1958 to 1962 tenure. All wolves he temporarily freed for behavioural studies were either returned to captivity or were known to be killed. I was closely associated with both Pimlott and the captive wolves in Algonquin Park between 1959 and 1965, first as a student assistant and then a graduate student with Pimlott as co-supervisor, studying howling by members of that captive population. There was never any discussion of permanent, deliberate, or accidental releases.

Pimlott’s research objective was “to determine the influence of wolves on wildlife populations in Ontario and to provide a factual background for a judicious and efficient program of predator management” (Pimlott *et al.* 1969: 5). Neither wolf taxonomy nor population augmentation was a part of that. Pimlott was hired partly to ascertain wolf population response to bounty removal, following such recent removal by

western provinces. Any augmentation of the population would have been self-defeating.

Mary Theberge and I followed Pimlott’s Algonquin wolf research with our own between 1986 and 2000. By then, genetics had entered the arsenal of research tools, and we were completely surprised when our geneticist partners, Brad White, Paul Wilson, and Sonya Grewal of Trent University, found a low level of Coyote genes in many Algonquin wolves. However, we were able to attribute that to annual winter wolf migration into broken farmlands outside the park that resulted in excessive wolf mortality, close association with Coyotes during the breeding season, and some coyote movement into vacant park wolf territories. These findings were reported in our 2004 monograph cited by Wheeldon and Patterson and our 1998 book *Wolf Country: Eleven Years Tracking Algonquin Wolves* (McClelland & Stewart).

Literature Cited

- Pimlott, D.H., J.A. Shannon, and G.B. Kolenosky.** 1969. The ecology of the timber wolf in Algonquin Provincial Park. Department of Lands and Forests, Maple, Ontario, Canada.

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